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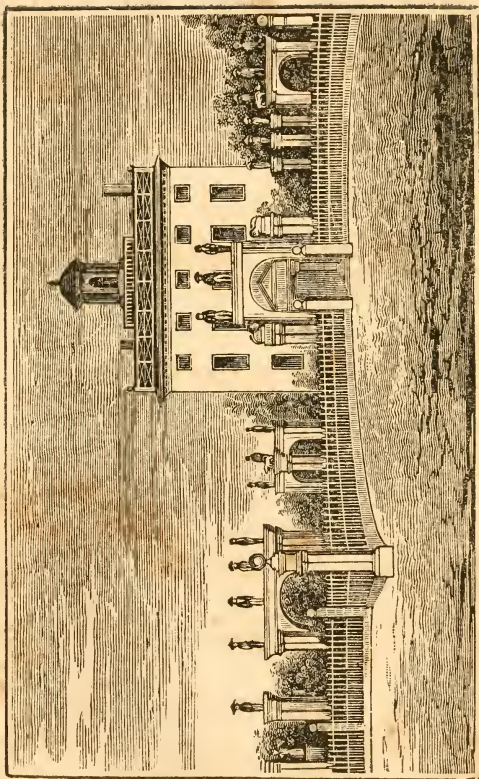
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.









A View of the Mansion of the late LORD TIMOTHY DEXTER, Newburyport. See Page 18.

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LIFE

OF

TIMOTHY DEXTER;

EMBRACING SKETCHES

OF THE

ECCENTRIC CHARACTERS

THAT

COMPOSED HIS ASSOCIATES.

By SAMUEL L. KNAPP.

"Any thing out of the common course is hartshorn to my spirits."
Burton's Anat. of Mel.

"The wart on Cicero's nose, will be remembered as long as his eloquence."

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P R E F A C E .

IN looking over some old papers a short time since, I came across several memoranda I had made many years ago, on the eccentric person, commonly called LORD DEXTER. The man and most that related to him had passed from my mind as one of those dreams in the course of our lives, that make a strong impression for a time, and then sink from the memory, perhaps never to return. The perusal of these old notes awakened recollections of by-gone times so distinctly, and brought with them so many sunny images, that I felt, at once, determined to give the picture a more

permanent canvass than these Sibylline leaves that I had dragged up from the cells of the cavern. All the dramatis personæ of the piece were well known to me and were subjects of my particular study ; and I think that these persons will, at once, be recognized by many in the neighborhood in which they lived, as drawn fully from life, and no trait of their characters or acts as set down in malice.

The poet I have described, is remembered by thousands who retain a recollection of his air, and manner, as well as the tones of his stentorian voice. The person of the colored woman is yet fresh in the recollections of men, women and children. The weird sisters in the group are not strange personages ; not a few will remember them distinctly, for they were of notoriety in their day. The astrologer has now been dead more than thirty years, and much of the present generation have come up since his departure ; but there are several now in active life, who knew him well and have excellent anecdotes of him still in store. It is not many years since I heard several of them.

The Dog-town landscape, was once true to nature and history, but in the march of intellect

there may be, for ought I know, a city resplendent in architecture and famed for wisdom, on the spot once so barren and desolate, that the surveyor's chain had hardly crossed it when I saw it. Images of buried poverty and misery, may be called up by the historian and the philanthropist "to point a moral or adorn a tale." One reason, perhaps, for thinking our fathers were better than we are, may be, that we cherish the memory of the good only and leave in forgetfulness all that were indifferent or bad.

To judge rightly of the past we should see every shade and every light of the picture. The living panorama that passes before us must be scrupulously examined to give us a fair understanding of the matter; and those of memory should be as well grouped and arranged, for us to draw sound opinions from them. There is a sort of evening shadow over the past, which brings on a distinctness which cannot be had under more vertical rays of the sun. Some may take exceptions to our going too minutely into past events. This is not the example which sacred history sets us. In that history, virtues and vices, weakness and strength are fully exhibited. There is a fastidiousness about modern times that often re-

strains a free pen; which may be illustrated by an anecdote. A modern Venetian magnate on seeing West's picture of "Christ Rejected," observed, that he thought it unkind that the indecision of his ancestor, PONTIUS PILOT, should so often be brought forward at this late day.



LIFE OF DEXTER.

IF "the proper study of mankind is man," every form of character should pass under our notice. No one can be said to have a thorough knowledge of human nature, who has only examined a few of the good and wise. The naturalist fills his museum with every production of nature, and takes as much pleasure in studying the "elegantly little," as the vast; and perhaps dwells longer on the structure and plumage of the fairy humming bird, than on the enormous wing of the albatross. Goldsmith, in his *Animated Nature*, has taken as much trouble to describe the frog and the toad, as he has in portraying the horse, the noblest of all the quadrupeds on earth. The mighty delineator of human nature, of habits and education, Shakspeare, has made greater effort to

show off the eccentric and the foolish than he has to exhibit the wise, the heroic and the good. In portraying such men as Julius Cæsar, Anthony, Cicero and the more ancient philosophers and warriors, he has taken whole pages from Plutarch and other writers, but his eccentrics and fools are all his own. In this new path he seemed not to borrow any thing, and his Touchstones, Dogberrys, Malvolios, are his alone. Did any previous dramatist furnish him with models for his Masters Shallow, Slender and Silence? No one will pretend to point out any such characters in any work of antiquity. Æsop drew some characters that were foolish enough but they were nothing to Shakspeare's creation; yet the very moment their likenesses were seen they were known to be natural.

The miser, the fop and the downright fool are found in many works, but that commingling of cunning, shrewdness, imbecility, roguery and sarcasm, which constitutes some minds and makes up an anomaly in the human family, has seldom been attempted. After Shakspeare, Sir Walter Scott has been the most successful in his dramatic characters, and it cannot be denied but that his eccentric beings are the master touches of his pencil. All his singular beings are acting in their proper sphere and make up the variety which nature intended to exhibit. These

satirists have dealt in moral and mental monsters; such beings as they wished to chastise, they called up by the force of the imagination, and after lashing them as long as they enjoyed the sounds of their own whips, held them before the world, and then the monsters sunk again to the shades. Not so with the creations of Shakspeare and Scott; these poets and masters of every spell, have left their offspring to share immortality with themselves; Touchstone and Meg Merrilies will never die while their progenitors are remembered.

Tired of dwelling upon "the tall, the wise, the reverend head," and of the prowess of heroes, I was looking over some old papers, and among them I found a few pages of memoranda, made many years ago, upon the life and character of that eccentric being, now remembered by thousands, Timothy Dexter. The fame of this singular man was not confined to the town, county or state in which he lived; but many of the anecdotes respecting him have been published in different parts of the world. No doubt that a great many stories told of him were made up by the ingenious, but still there are enough very well authenticated, to make a few amusing pages, and to throw some light on the idiosyncrasies of the human mind. It is a well known fact that "strange beings

will find strange associates." This was fully proved in the life of Dexter. No one ever collected about him a more singular group than this oddity. His tricks were *fantastic*, but never *malignant*, when free from the insanity of inebriation, and the reader, I think, when he has followed him through a part of his eccentricities and follies will feel more pity than hatred for the man, whose only crime was in his possessing Fortunatus' cap, to catch a shower of gold for which others had to labor hard to obtain in scanty drops.

Timothy Dexter was born in Malden, near Boston, in the year 1743. He was bred to the leather dressing, then, and since, a lucrative profession. The business for the commonwealth of Massachusetts, was nearly all concentrated in the town of Charlestown. Sheep-skins, goat and deer-skins, were dressed so elastic and soft as to make a delicate wear. About the time of Dexter's apprenticeship the secret of dressing skins after the fashion of leather brought from the Levant, called morrocco leather, became known to some of the craft in Charlestown, and for years they had the monopoly of the business. A great demand for the article for ladies' shoes gave the initiated constant employment. On arriving at the age of twenty-one, Dexter commenced business for

himself, and by industry, frugality and perseverance, soon became thrifty and above board; and although Charlestown was laid in ashes at the commencement of the revolutionary struggle, he pursued in the neighborhood his calling to a profitable account, and in a few years after the peace, could command several thousands of dollars in specie. He had married a widow whose former husband had been in the occupation and had left his family in good circumstances. She was industrious also, and saving, and made no inconsiderable profit on a small stock of goods she kept for sale in the huckster line. Thus they went on, good, quiet, tidy, honest folks, blessed with children to labor for, as well as for themselves. The times from the peace of 1783, until after the adoption of the federal constitution in 1789, were dark and difficult, and many were sadly oppressed. The old continental money was depreciated to almost nothing, and the securities issued by the state of Massachusetts, which had for a while kept public confidence in that quarter alive, had now sunk to about two shillings and sixpence on the pound. The patriotic holders were greatly distressed; many of them, possessing nothing for seven years' services but this trash, were forced to part with it for any thing they could get. Two benevolent gentlemen in

Boston, John Hancock, governor of the commonwealth at that time, who had formerly been president of the continental congress, and Thomas Russel, the most eminent merchant then in America, to keep up the public confidence, and to oblige a friend, would make purchases of these securities, until the amount was considerable. This had the desired effect in some measure, and a few other purchasers were found, but hard money was so scarce that not much was done in this brokerage. Dexter finding his great neighbors, Hancock and Russel, doing something in stocks, took all his own cash, with what his wife had, and in imitation purchased likewise. He probably made better bargains than the magnates did. He bought in smaller quantities, and had better opportunities to make his purchases than they had. He felt that he could live on his industry, and ventured all on the chance of these securities ever being paid. When Hamilton's funding system went into operation, he was at once a wealthy man, and leaving his mechanical business, speculated pretty largely in stocks, and to great advantage, for there were many who then seemed to feel and reason as if the government of the United States was a house built on sands, and the acts of congress but of little more permanency than writing traced on the same

material on the sea-shore, which the first storm would efface.

Dexter soon aspired to join the upper classes of society, as many a fortunate block-head had done before him; but he would not be hypocritical, and he could not keep his mouth shut, and of course made no head-way in his attempted progress to join the aristocrats of the day. Nothing could be done with the upper classes in Boston, and he found it more difficult in Salem, which led him to turn his attention to Newburyport, the third sea-port then in Massachusetts. It was a delightful place.

The town of Newburyport is situated on the right bank of the Merrimack. The whole territory belonging to the corporation is but little more than six hundred acres, and nearly one half of this is low pasture lands, but the thickly settled part is a lovely spot of ground. The southerly line is on an elevation about sixty or seventy feet from the surface of the river. The main street, called High street, running about a mile and a quarter from east to west on the town boundary, extends either way much further, making a delightful riding course of more than three miles in distance. The streets running at right angles with High street to the water are intersected by others, throwing a great portion of the whole site into squares

convenient for building lots. The soil is light, gravelly and warm, well suited for gardens, for which the town is famous. Many of the buildings are still of wood: forty years ago they were chiefly so. The water here is good and the streets are wide and kept clean, and every thing about the "sweet village," bore marks of industry, thrift and comfort. Numerous churches and school-houses were placed at convenient distances. The shipping was extensive, for the size of the place. The town was thrifty for many years before the revolution, and when the war broke out several merchants left Boston to carry on their commerce in Newburyport. Their business flourished from the peace of 1783, until the embargo of 1807, when it received a grievous wound, but, thank heaven, not a vital stab as many thought it would have proved, for it is slowly rising from its difficulties. The evils will vanish in time, for the people act there upon the Grecian maxim that "the gods sell all things to industry." The education of this people was plain and wholesome. Reading, writing and arithmetic were taught to all, and their moral precepts were all drawn from one book. The bible was read from lisping infancy to purblind decrepitude. Every one was master of the good old translation from the Saxon—and it contains a vo-

cabulary sufficiently capacious for all the moral and religious relations of life ; the business relations find their appropriate language as fast as they are required. There never was any canaille here : some few there are, as everywhere, the unfortunate and poor ; but the mass of people were well to do ; intelligent and active, they of course were happy. The wealthy and intellectual portion of the community formed a circle that had sufficient of the comforts and refinements of life to give society a charm which is seldom found in overgrown cities. The population was not so large as to hide any individual, however humble. Each stood out as it were from the canvass, and could be examined by every one who wished to observe. It will be seen, by those who take the trouble to think upon the subject, that there are more singular and eccentric characters to be found in small places than in large ; in the latter it is hard to attract notice. The diorama is constantly shifting, and an individual is seen for an instant only, and then disappears, perhaps forever ; while in the small picture, which is not larger than the angle of ordinary vision, each image stands for constant examination.

The landed property in Newburyport was, at the time of Dexter's coming there, lower than in other sea-ports in the East, in consequence of the failure of several distinguished

merchants who had traded too largely on the return of peace. Their palaces—for they could not, in justice, be called by a lesser name—were in the market, and Dexter purchased two of them. One of them he occupied for a short time, and on the revival of business sold it at a fair profit. The other he fitted up for himself in his own style. It was a princely chateau, standing on the height of land about a quarter of a mile from the river, commanding a most beautiful and extensive view of the sea, the Isle-of-shoals, and the far surrounding country. The grounds had been laid out in the most approved European manner by the intelligent artists from England and France.

The house was capacious and well finished, and the out-houses tasteful and commodious. A lovelier spot or a more airy mansion, Lucullus himself could not have wished; and all his ponds would not have furnished a greater variety of excellent fish than the Newburyport market supplied. When Dexter bought this seat every thing about it was in fine order; but it was not to the taste of the purchaser. He raised minarets on the roof of his mansion, surmounted by gilt balls in profusion; and the whole building was painted as finely as a fiddle. One who marked the alteration compared it to a person changing the robes of a peer and

assuming the motley dress of a harlequin ; but this made the bumpkins stare, and gave the owner the greatest pleasure. In all the agitations of a vitiated taste, Dexter went on with his *supposed improvements*. In the garden, which extended several hundreds of feet on the noble high-way, passing in front of it, and was filled with fruit and flowers of indigenous growth, or those imported from Europe, or acclimated from warmer regions, the tasteless owner, in his rage for notoriety, created rows of columns, fifteen feet at least, high, on which to place colossal images carved in wood. Directly in front of the door of the house, on a Roman arch of great beauty and taste, stood general Washington in his military garb. On his left hand was Jefferson ; on his right, Adams, uncovered, for he would suffer no one to be on the right of Washington with a hat on. On the columns in the garden there were figures of Indian chiefs, military generals, philosophers, politicians and statesmen, now and then a goddess of Fame, or Liberty, meretricious enough to be either. If he, in the plentitude of his generosity, raised a column to a great man to-day, he reserved the liberty of changing his name to-morrow ; and often the painter's brush made or unmade a fierce warrior. General Morgan, yesterday, is Bonaparte to-day ; and the

great Corsican leader was often as much neglected in the garden of the capricious Dexter, as he afterwards was at St. Helena. But Dexter was more of a gentleman than Sir Hudson Lowe, and never passed Bonaparte—even when he was not so great a favorite—without touching his hat.

There were upwards of forty of the figures, including four lions, two couchant, and two passant. These were well carved, and attracted more attention from those who had any taste than all the exhibition except the arch, on which stood the three presidents. The lions were open mouthed and fierce as if they had been rampart in Heraldic glory, and reminded the gazer of the lion in the sounding verses of Sir Richard Blackmore:

“The lordly lion looked so wondrous grim,
His very shadow durst not follow him.”

These images were all in good repair when Dexter died. The first that time or accident threw down, was the gigantic Cornplanter, the mighty progenitor of a race of illustrious sachems. Whether this was ominous of the fate of the red men, or a mere accident, no oracle yet has told us; but when the column was prostrate in the dust, the Indian was placed as a scare crow to the chickens, but they soon became brave under the feet of “the fierce barbarian grinning o’er his prey.” The rest of the columns stood

the sunshine and the storms until "the great September gale," which happened in 1815, when most of them were thrown down in that tornado. The three presidents rode out the storm. The executor on the estate sold the images at auction. The goddess of Fame sold for the most money—she brought five dollars. The image of the great premier of England, William Pitt, whose sagacity and firmness guided Britain in safety through the most terrific convulsions of nations, when the great deep of the political world was broken up and a universal deluge threatened mankind, was sold for a dollar; and an ecclesiastic who had been named the "Traveling Preacher" brought only fifty cents.

Dexter had put himself among the great he delighted to honor, and labelled the column, "I am the greatest man in the EAST;" and I believe once it was extended to the North, West and South, and his fame as a philosopher made an addendum. What a satire on monumental glory! On the fallen image no bid could be had; so fares it with those who thrust themselves into company with whom they had no claim of equality.

The cost of these columns and images was considerable, probably twice as much as the whole estate, when Dexter purchased. The arch and figures of the presidents were expensive, two thousand dollars or more;

the lions, without the columns on which they stood, were carved at two hundred dollars apiece. The other thirty-six columns with their images must have cost two hundred dollars each—taking in the lettering and gilding, the whole could not have fallen short of fifteen thousand dollars.

In the group on the arch, Mr. Jefferson holds in his hand a scroll partly unrolled, intended to compliment him as the author of the Declaration of Independence. The sculptor had not imagined it so obscure as to require an inscription, but lord Dexter thought that he would make the painter finish what the sculptor, in his opinion, neglected. His favorite painter, a very clever artist, Mr. Babson, was employed. He commenced his labor by taking the precaution to tie a rope around his body to prevent accidents on the scanty staging, and made it fast to some part of the arch. He measured out his letters, "The Declaration of Independence," and while pencilling it, Dexter, from the ground, could not distinctly see the letters, but as soon as the painter had reached Dec, Dexter called out to him, "That is not the way to spell Constitution." "You want," returned the painter "the Declaration of Independence." "I want the Constitution, and the Constitution I will have."

The Constitution had then just been adopt-

ed, and by the adoption Dexter's fortune was made, and that was uppermost in his mind at all times, and the Declaration of Independence was a matter too deep in the recesses of ancient history for his lordship's memory; still, with the pertinacity of an honest mind, Mr. Babson would not erase his letters, for he knew what the artist intended. Dexter raved; the painter remonstrated most distinctly, when Dexter went into the house, brought out a large pistol and discharged it at his *man of letters* before the latter had a chance of escape. The ball entered the house, and the marks of its passage were long afterwards seen there. The enraged lord was no shot, and was fortunate in hitting the side of a house instead of the object of his wrath. The letters remain to this day, "*The Constitution.*"

Society is always in danger when the sword and purse are united, as they were in this instance;—in fact, their union has always been attended with fearful consequences. Their connection has never been legitimate. The liberties of Rome were lost when the Pretorian band had possession of the military chest. The mind that has two such powers to wield, sinks under its exertions, for it is constantly in a state of intoxication; the rule extends from the household officers to those of an empire.

Dexter imported elegant articles from France to furnish his house, and it must be confessed that his agents were men of taste; for some portions of it were splendid and classical. It was soon after the era of phrensy, in France, when David's pencil drew models for the upholsterer, and the sans culotte and the assassin changed their savagism to taste, intending to enjoy this world, as they believed in no other. This elegant and tasteful furniture was soon spoiled by abuse. He and his son, with such companions as they could find, kept up their revels in the best apartments of the house. His wife was seldom at home, for she could not live in his house with any comfort. This mansion, once the abode of a wise and elegant man, with a well-regulated family, now became a pest-house and not unfrequently a bagnio. Of course, the splendid French colors became tawdry-yellow or dirty-red. Curtains and counterpanes which had once belonged to the queen of France, which, at all events, were elegant, were covered with unseemly stain, offensive to sight and to smell.

He had seen at the houses of Hancock and Russel, cases of well bound books, and he was seized with a desire to emulate them in the possession of a library. He bought the best bound books he could find, and in that manner secured some valuable works;

but he was often deceived, as such binding as he liked was put on worthless books and exposed to his sight as by accident. He had splendid editions of Borne's Thornton's Works, the Bon Ton Magazine and all such ridiculous trash; but he never read in them ten minutes at a time. These books were scattered through every apartment in his house, while the book case was half empty, and its doors on the swing. The leaves in his books were turned down at places attractive to the reader. The libidinous prints were often much worn, and many books were entirely despoiled of their cuts by the people who visited him. The library, when sold, amounted to a trifle only, as most of those of a fair character were torn and defaced.

He was told of the great passion some of the noble lords in England had for paintings, who had expended large fortunes in collecting galleries for the gratification of their taste in this way, and he gave himself no rest until he had commenced a gallery. He employed a young gentleman of taste, who was about to visit Holland and other parts of Europe, to act as a *picture fancier* for him, and it must be confessed that he had made some good purchases, but on his return, Dexter selected all the daubs and declined taking the others. The collector was at first indignant and mor-

tified, but some one suggested to him to mark those ordinary paintings with some great master name, and all would be right. This he did in self-defence, and a Correggio, a Guido, a Raffaele, or a Titian were hung upon the walls before the paint was dry that marked their names. If he was cheated, he was not the only dupe in picture buying, for many who have started into sudden wealth, and who supposed that the acquisition of dollars superinduced a refinement of taste, have been most laughably imposed upon, and often while pointing out the beauties of the picture to their guests, by rote, as the salesman dealt them out at his rooms, or the auctioneer when his eloquence was enforced by his hammer, are unconscious of the sneer that plays about the lips of the listening connoisseur who is waiting for his dinner. In Dexter's palmy state there were but few good pictures in the country, and the most wealthy and ancient families contented themselves with a portrait from Smybert or Copley, of some ancestor, and the rest of the ornaments were some French engravings of Joseph, sold by his brethren, or Jonah thrown into the sea, or of the bears sent to devour the wicked children; but the most venerated painting of the household was generally the FAMILY COAT OF ARMS, the production of some wonderful sign-painter who had suffi-

cient enterprise to own Guillim's Book of Heraldry, from which he copied the arms of such families as he found there, and who transcribed on the back of the picture, the description of the *bearings* and *crests* in language equally unintelligible to limner and possessor.

At one time Dexter's passion was for horses, and with the assistance of his coachman he was frequently successful in obtaining a fine span for his carriage; but although he kept a beautiful saddle horse, he seldom ventured to appear on horseback. He conceived a desire for the exhibition of cream-colored horses, and after a long time bought a pair of very good ones, and for a while he heard the boys cry out, "Huzza for Dexter's horses!" but their admiration died away, and his love for cream-colored horses died with it. Unstable as the wind, he sold them for no other fault than that they would not change color as his fancy changed.

His coach was elegant, and well, as it came from the maker's hands, but he must make it gaudy and finical. He had his coat of arms painted on it, with the Baronial supporters, which he stole from the Peerage according to the dictates of his taste, being beyond the power of the Herald office and all its kings at arms.

He found it difficult to fill up the measure

of his time, as he had led an industrious life. And finding merchants then the leading men, and thinking that they were soon to be the nobility of the country as they had been the nobility of Venice, as some of those around him intimated, he engaged most zealously in commerce. At that period it was almost impossible to make a bad voyage, go any where, in any part of the habitable globe. His traffic was principally to the West Indies and to Europe, but he sent adventures to the East Indies, which were generally very profitable. While engaged in commerce, Dexter's son, Samuel Lord Dexter, as he was called, arrived to that age when young men think themselves capable of doing the business of factor abroad, then seldom trusted to the master of a vessel. The son importuned the father for this employment and prevailed upon him to send him in that capacity to Europe; the result was that he squandered the full amount of the cargo at the gambling table, where he was a mere gull. The old man had some misgiving when he sent his hopeful heir on such an errand, and was not so much disappointed as might have been supposed at such an issue. The boy was naturally imbecile, but his course of education made him a tool for every sharper. Intoxicated with the fame of his father's wealth, he thought that it

would supply the place of every thing; of course he was idle at all times, and profligate when he could be. He grew in size more rapidly than most boys, but his mind was stored with nothing useful or ornamental. He was capricious in his appetite, petulant in his temper, and cowardly in the extreme, and, in fact, rotten to the core. He had but one redeeming virtue among boys, and it was that of profusion. He bribed them with cakes, fruit and confectionary, to assist him in getting his lessons and to screen him from insults. His father's ideas of gentility, consisted in the expenditures of his son, and as he was the most lavish of all the boys, of course he was the most elevated of the gentry. His education was costly, and his father thought it good. The only ingenuity and talent he ever exhibited was in inventing lies to screen himself from punishment. The boys despised, and the master pitied his imbecility. School became irksome to him, as smaller boys went before him, and larger ones neglected him. On returning home and mingling with the young merchants he conceived the desire of being supercargo, and it eventuated as we have stated.

When he returned from his European voyage he lived in perpetual quarrels with his father, and plunged into every species

of dissipation ; a more useless or profligate young man could not be found. He was a goose from whom every knave plucked a feather, to whom every Cyprian had a chain to hold him as a cub. If he had been fortunate enough to have had a sober and discreet father, who would have insisted on a proper education, feeble as he was, something might have been made of him. It was a difficult time to educate a boy who had any expectations of fortune from his parents, for there were then many wretched examples of profligacy among the sons of the rich men of that time. It would be painful to call up names, but most of those who have reached middle age can call to mind many fine fellows, who, from mistaken impressions of life, have gone down to the grave "unwept, unhonored, and unsung." The R's, the K's, the T's, and the S's, &c. &c., read nothing but anecdotes of Charles Fox's dissipation, or of Richard Brinsly Sheridan's wit and profligacy. In the sport of *buckism* they ate hundred dollar bills on a slice of bread and butter, and skipped dollars on the surface of a pond, all to show their nobility. Many of their fathers, honest men, whose great merit was success, looked forward to the time when orders of nobility would be created in this country, and if they were not elevated to the peerage themselves, they

imagined that their high-bred sons would stand a good chance for the advancement. They did not see that the polarity of the government and people was inclining to democracy; but, fortunate or not, all those aristocratical feelings were swept away by the tide that was then beginning to agitate the public mind. The past seems a dream to those who lived in it, and almost a legend to those who only take it from history; from history did I say? history was afraid to record a tythe of the truth of the times. The wisest knew nothing of the elastic power of public opinion. Young Dexter, like many of his contemporaries, the sons of rich men died, without doing the slightest good in society and without any particle of regret from any one. No drunken companion who had partaken of his wine even said "he was a clever fellow; it is a pity he went off so soon."

We may as well speak of the daughter of Timothy Dexter now as at any other time. She bloomed for a while, a giggling belle of more than ordinary personal beauty; but her education was superficial as her brother's. The fame of her father's wealth brought about her a host of swindling, simpering gallants; but most of them retired after a visit or two, finding it impossible, with all their love of money, to bring their minds to

make serious proposals to one so entirely unfitted for society. At length, a grave, philosophical scholar, who had travelled in Europe and the East, made his bow to her. His fame was then at its height. She saw his name in the newspapers, as having made a pilgrimage to Mecca, or of doing some other wonderful feat in the way of travel, and her vanity was raised at his attentions. He was deeply read in men, and soon knew how to manage lord Dexter. They were married; the father did not bleed as freely as he expected, and his wife did not improve as he thought she would do under his instruction. They dragged along together, she growing every day more slatternly and silly and he more morose and inattentive. They had one child, a daughter. The father has been attentive to her morals and education, and she makes a respectable, excellent woman. Soon after the child was born, his wife grew intemperate, was led astray, and a divorce followed. She lived for many years a sad object of fatuity and wretchedness. There are none of the creatures of God that make so pitiful a spectacle as a feeble mind sunk in vice. It has no redeeming flash of thought, no lucid reminiscences, no bitter weepings over the past, which show what once existed, and often screen a fallen being from deserved neglect

and insult. The bloated forms of idiocy, and the obstreperous, vacant laugh of insanity are appalling to sensitive minds, and a sore lessener to those who indulge in the pride of human nature. She was kept out of public sight, and supported by the provident care of her father; one good deed which should be named in the waste of his life, where but few green spots are to be found.

Dexter, by every devise, could only be notorious, but not popular. He soon found that people did not always find respectability according to the extent of their taxes, nor even in proportion to their profusion. The men would not associate with him, the women shunned him, and the boys used him at times for their mirth. Boys are shrewd critics and good judges of men, within which lists they would not suffer him to come. In any other portion of our country, but such a quiet place as Newburyport, he could not have existed; the mob, or the incensed citizen, would have driven him out until his reason had come to him; but there they assumed no Lynch law, having too great a respect for the ordinances and laws established by their fathers.

He had nothing to give the people but his money, and this they would not except, at the price of granting him indulgences to

commit crimes, or even peccadilloes or follies, but they were willing to protect him in all his rights. He would have done better in London than in the town of Newburyport. In a large place, generosity, or the parade of it, has ten thousand wings, but domestic sins are often hid in the mighty wilderness of an overgrown population, while they are directly exposed to the sharp-sightedness of a village.

When Dexter first came to Newburyport he opened his garden for the inspection of the public, and in the seasons of fruits and flowers was very liberal to his visitors, particularly to those from the country. Gay maidens came from his gates laden with flowers or fruits, and seemed happy in their visit to the strange man. If their gallants thought he was not a Solomon, they found him no niggard. This did not last long, for he soon considered, and in fact called his grounds "*a yellow-bird trap*;" for although he was an hundred times rebuffed and treated with the profoundest contempt, yet he still persisted in believing that he was master of all he found there. The story of his attempts at improper liberties with his female visitors soon became current, and the number diminished every day; but those who still persisted in coming were of the less scrupulous of their sex. His flowers and

fruits lost their charms, and often were offered in vain. If an unsophisticated female came from the country, unacquainted with his reputation, he gloated over her with the most disgusting fondness; but it was frequently a long while before the girl understood the man who offended her by such incivilities. There were instances of his getting most sadly used up by such guests, when they saw the situation they were in. On the whole, his trap-cage cost more than it came to; for sometimes a half a dozen country damsels made him a visit for a frolic, and protected each other.

When disappointed of his prey he would rave about house and curse his family for joining in the league against him. How wretched is the life of a dotard, in the pursuit of what he calls pleasure.

A thousand anecdotes have been told of Timothy Dexter showing his folly and his success, and many of them are unquestionably correct. When in the full tide of his commercial speculations, he was the same imitative creature as in buying his securities. Some of the merchant's clerks were fond of quizzing him; at one time they put him up to send a large lot of warming-pans to the West Indies, as a part of an assorted cargo. The captain, a young and ingenious man, finding this article in the invoice, set

his yankee talents to work to find a sale for them. He took off the covers and had handsome handles put to them, and called them skimmers and the pan part, ladles. He then had them introduced into a large sugar-making establishment, and they were much approved of, as the best machines of their kind ever invented. Every sugar-maker was anxious to obtain several sets for his establishment, and the whole was sold to great advantage.

At another time a rigger of one of his vessels called upon him for a large quantity of stay stuff, when he rode to Salem and Boston, and purchased up all the whale-bone to be found, and had it brought to Newburyport, and when his workmen laughed at him for his stupidity, he said, "Never mind." In a short time it was found that he had monopolized the article and could command his own price for it. This put him on a scent by which he frequently profited, for he would inquire if any article was scarce in the market, and if so, he would buy up all he could find, and not unfrequently raised the price of it to double or more. He made quite a speculation in opium at one time, in this way. It often happened that shrewd merchants were suspicious of selling him an article, apprehensive that it was almost a sure sign that it was going to rise, although they could see no reason for it.

He purchased a splendid country seat, in the town of Chester, in New Hampshire, thinking that novelty would please him, and that the reputation for wealth would avail him more in the country than in the town. Here, after ornamenting his house and out-houses in the most finical manner, and otherwise lavishing large sums of money in making magnificent stables, and monstrous sized pigeon-houses, he began to quarrel with the inhabitants, who cared but little for the wealth they could not share; and they more than once put a stop to his impudence with a horse-whip. Hampton Beach, in the county of Rockingham and state of New Hampshire, is a famous watering place. There is a beautiful beach of no inconsiderable extent, from which the eye rests on a boundless expanse of the ocean. At morning and evening, on fine summer days, are to be seen gay groups of men, women and children wandering about, picking up shells which the winter storms and waves have brought to the shore, and to add to the picturesque beauties of the scene, there is a bluff called "Boar's Head," against which the sea dashes in impotent roar in the storm, but at the summer season so gently laves as to give it that beauty which borders on sublimity, but does not reach it. On this beach, those who came to take "a sniff of the

briny," are free and easy in their intercourse with strangers. Here Dexter often resorted to catch the notice of some one who had not much acquaintance with "*the greatest man in the East*," and ran over his history, which he was generally fond of communicating to any one who was willing to listen to him. On such occasions he was silly, but still amusing to many. A playful girl amused herself with him on one of their excursions, until he lost all sense of propriety, and rudely assailed her. She outran him, and coming up all out of breath to the carriage where her protector was, she entered her complaint to him. He was a gigantic youth, who could not brook this treatment of his female friend, and yet disdained to use his strength in the ordinary way to avenge her, seized the old man by the collar, led him to the steps of the carriage and seating himself on them, took the offender across his knee and chastised him with his open hand as school-masters used to do unlucky urchins who stole apples, or played truant, in former days. The blows were so severe as to make the blood trickle to the heels of the offender. This kept him in good order in public places for years.

Dexter was not only ambitious of being a lover of learning, but made a most wonderful effort to write a book. This extraordi-

nary performance was called, a very significant title, "A PICKLE FOR THE KNOWING ONES." It was a galamathies of all the *saws*, *shreds*, and *patches* that ever entered the head of "*a motley fool*," with some items of his own history and some allusions to his family difficulties. It was so ridiculous that there seemed no small degree of ingenuity in making it up, and probably he had some assistance from the printer, or his devil. He spurned all the ordinary laws of orthoe-py or punctuation. He spelt from the light of nature, and left common sense to make out the pointing; but fearing they should forget the stops, he put them all in the last page, requesting the reader to place them where he pleased. Of this work he published and gave away a large edition, understanding that the noblemen in England did not sell their literary works, but sent them as presents through the land. The example of lord Byron, of later days, could not then have been cited, as he had never written or published, or sold to them who gave him the most for his works like other men. This work contained a likeness of this "*greatest man of the East*," admirable for its correctness, and valuable for the engraving. His little dog is placed in the foreground, and is as good a likeness as that of his master. He was made happy by hearing the compli-

ments paid to him for this extraordinary work. He was told, and he repeated it, that Shakespeare and Milton were not his equals, and his work would be read when they were forgotten; not thinking it might be added, as it was in another case, "*not until then.*" The book is out of print; many of these volumes are no doubt scattered throughout the country, but, by most diligent search, I have been unable to procure a copy, although in my inquiry I found king James' Blast blown against Tobacco, and many curious old sermons, with long and quaint titles. What a careless generation! one would almost think that the press had not the power to preserve works of genius, according to the boast of the times. There are now in existence several volumes of his library, but his production has sunk to oblivion. I think he has broached the idea of his own immortality in the volume, and anticipated the wonderings of posterity over his lucubrations. He is not the only author and publisher of a book who has made erroneous calculations. "I write for perpetuity," may have been said in the hearts of thousands; but few such presentiments were the true promptings of genius.

When the news of the death of Louis XVI. arrived in Boston, Dexter was there. He hastened to Newburyport, as fast as his

horses would carry him; but said nothing of the intelligence he had received. It was early in the evening, when several of the church bells of the town began to toll, to the surprise of the inhabitants. On reaching the doors of the churches the people found them closed. Dexter had procured the sextons, when he found those that could be bribed, to commence the passing bell before he promulgated the news of the death of the amiable monarch. The selectmen soon stopped the bells, but Dexter gained his point, that of promulgating the mournful tidings after his own manner. The boys left their play, and gathering in groups, listened to the tale of woe. One, however, of the Jacobins of that day, a little fellow, said he was glad of it; all kings should die, said he, that poor people might have their money; he wished the poor would cut off the heads of our rich men to-morrow. Another urchin mounted the fence, and from a post took the other side. He said king Louis XVI. was a good man, and assisted the Americans in gaining their independence; and wicked men cut off his head before the good men could come to save him; and then related several anecdotes of his generosity to the poor. The boys were mostly on the side of the latter speaker. The first was hustled out of the company;

and some one of them hearing that it was Dexter who brought the news, and paid sexton Hale and others for tolling the bell, proposed to make Dexter a visit and to sympathize with him. The great man, at that time, lived in the centre of the town, in the first palace that he had purchased. The proposition was at once acceded to, and the crowd moved to State street, and paraded before Dexter's door, who came out to know their wishes. The speaker whose eloquence had been approved of by the boys stated to him the object of their visit, and thanked him for noticing the death of so good a man. Dexter acquitted himself remarkably well. He said in reply, they were fine boys, and would grow up and make great men; adding, that if the fruits or flowers were growing, he would let them all come into the garden; but it was the season only for digging. He then proposed, that they should come in and have a glass of wine; but the boys said that would be making merry, and declined the honor. As they turned to depart they raised the cry, "long live Dexter." Never was being more happy than Dexter at that moment. The boys went home, some were reprimanded for the course they took, and others were commended for their good feelings. Dexter, during the whole French revolution, expressed his commiseration for the royal

family that had escaped the guillotine, and said that he would fit up his house for their accommodation; if they should escape to this country. At one period he bought up a large stock of provisions, alleging his belief that they would come here. They did not come; but provisions rose in price, and he made a handsome advance on them. This he attributed to Providence, to pay him for his good intentions; but most probably this was a piece of his sagacity, or of imitation, as some of his shrewd neighbors had accumulated a stock likewise, and saw their account in it as well as himself, without alleging any such reasons for their course of business. Such a man's motive, it is frequently difficult to discover, and perhaps would be equally difficult for him to honestly avow; there are but few men who are sufficiently attentive to their own thoughts to be able to analyze every motive to action, and among these Dexter was not one.

Dexter, notwithstanding he believed that his name would go down to posterity in great honor, and that over his remains there would hang a permanent halo of glory, still knew that, according to the course of nature, "this mortal coil must be shuffled off," and other worlds must be tried, and that sooner than he might expect. With this impression, he built himself a tomb, not

a dark and dreary vault, where neither air nor sun obtains entrance, except when its "ponderous and marble jaws are opened" to receive a tenant. Dexter's tomb was the basement story of a handsome summer-house, erected on a slightly position, surrounded by "shrub, flower and tree." The tomb was well lighted and ventilated — a mere pleasant retreat, "after life's fitful fever" should be over. In this sleep of death he knew not what dreams might come, and he said, that "as a candle burning in one's room at night kept off bad dreams, why should not the light of day keep off ugly spectres when we shall sleep the long sleep of death? and the music which the living have in the summer-house can offend no one."

Some one had told him, for it was the amusement of young and old wags to fill his head with singular events, that the great cardinal Wolsey, when he was in power, "sounding all the depths and shoals of honor," had sent to Egypt for a black marble sarcophagus of great size, in which his body was to wait the resurrection of the just. In all probability the relator did not tell him that the cardinal did not use his sarcophagus, having died in disgrace; and certainly no one could tell him whose mortal remains should rest in it, for lord Nelson, whose corse now occupies it, was then living in the full tide of

fame, the admiration of Dexter, with the rest of the world, for he had placed his effigy in his galaxy of the worthies who ornamented his grounds. After long meditation, he came to the conclusion of preparing his own coffin, as he had done his tomb, and most certainly reason could find no arguments against one, more than the other ; nor, in fact, against either. His first object was to hunt for an extraordinary lot of mahogany plank ; and, by picking a board here and another there, he succeeded in procuring them full of knots, curls and veins of rich hues. The next step was to employ a cabinet maker to construct the coffin. A house joiner, whose works were mostly pine, would not, in his mind, be sufficiently skilled to make such a doomsday article. A workman was at length found, of reputation enough to be employed. It was an excellent piece of work, well jointed and fastened, superbly lined and pillowed, and in which a living head might have rested comfortably. Four massy silver handles were attached to the sides, in order that it might be moved about without the awkwardness generally attendant on handling a coffin with a corse in it, particularly a heavy one. He surveyed the article with delight, and having the top unscrewed, tried this future repository of his ashes, and found that there was room

enough for him to lie well. He then placed it in a room convenient for exhibition. He took no small pleasure in showing it to his visitors, who generally expressed a wish to see it. At other times it was locked up with caution, for fear it might be injured, by accident or design; for he knew enough of human nature to believe, that envy and malice often struck their daggers into the coffin of those whose presence when living they fled from. With the key which fast bound his treasure in his pocket, he went to prepare the place in which he was to rest, by some new change of earth, wall or upper building, according to his caprice, and to hasten the time of his coming to it by copious draughts of alcohol—the grave-digger of millions.

After the tomb had been prepared, and the coffin finished to his taste, Dexter, with a few of his cronies, got up a mock funeral, supposed by many at the time to be a real one. He had, by giving to his wife, son and daughter, suits of mourning and money to boot, engaged them, at last, to acquiesce in his whim. Cards were sent to certain persons in the town to attend the funeral. Some who had no misgivings, and all who desired a frolic, came at the hour appointed. Some wag, for he could not get a priest to perform the burial service, read it and pro-

nounced a eulogy on the great man of the East. The procession moved to the garden-vault, the coffin was deposited, and the door locked. The assembled mourners returned to the large hall, where a sumptuous entertainment had been provided, and the choicest wines were poured out like water. Some one hinted that Dexter's ghost was seen at an upper window while the procession slowly moved to the vault, but this passed away, when a loud complaint was heard in the kitchen. It was lord Dexter caning his wife for not acting her part as she should have done in the ceremony. She had not shed a tear ! She should have cried to think it was not a reality. Dexter had been so much pleased in his concealment, in hearing of his praise, that he entered the wake-room with the highest glee ; shared in the wine, and threw small change from his window to the gaping crowd of boys who had gathered to witness the last solemn scene. These freaks amused a portion of the people, and did no great harm. The judicious grieved, but the mass loved fun. There was, however, a drawback to his experiment ; not a single bell tolled, when he expected the whole of them would have sounded a knell for his passing soul. That was not all ; not a requiem was sung, except by the wag who performed the funeral services : he gave one that

some bacchanalian had in former times composed for himself to be sung before his departure. Dexter expressed himself satisfied with every thing but the absence of the tolling bell, and his wife's dry eyes. His son had performed his part to admiration, being sufficiently drunk to weep without much effort. It is said that his grief was so excessive that he required support as he entered the tomb; at least, the old man was satisfied with his enactments.

To guard his images and his fruit, he generally, in the summer season, kept a sentry during the night. If the guard made no alarm he was pretty sure of being charged with negligence of duty. He often had a shrewd old man as a watchman at the time when his cherries were ripening, and he had a most noble orchard of this excellent fruit, planted by the care of the original owner of the premises he possessed. For several nights the watchman made no alarm, and Dexter began to suspect that he was leagued with those who used to purloin his cherries. This he did not fail to make known to all. The next night, at the dead hour of darkness, two discharges of a musket were heard. The inmates of the house rushed out half dressed and found the watchman deploring the deed he had done; blood was traced from one of the trees, on which

a limb was broken, to the wall that divided the garden from the town street; this was partly thrown down, and prints of hands and feet were seen in the clayey soil on which the victim had fallen, in his desperate exertions to escape; and then the traces of blood were lost in the grass.

The watchman was found in an agony of distress at the rash act, and threw all the blame, moral and legal, on his employer. Dexter was delighted, and was willing to take all responsibility. He was now amply revenged on the rascals who had plundered his garden. As a reward, he swore, in the plenitude of his delight, that his faithful watchman should be rewarded by fifty pounds of coffee. He had lately imported a cargo of coffee, and directed his wife to weigh it out. She, not having full confidence in the honesty of the transaction, and being prudent withal, gave the guard quite a small bag for one containing fifty pounds. Dexter cast his eye upon it, and suspecting the cheat, most solemnly declared that his wife should add five-fold for all deficiencies. The bag was weighed and fell sadly short. The quantity forfeited by the wife, when forthcoming, was more than the old man could shoulder, and he hired a hand cart to convey the coffee, the reward of his fidelity, to his own home. It was undoubtedly a hoax, but it

answered two purposes, without wounding any one. It satisfied Dexter, and frightened away the little thieving rascals, who had wishfully eyed his fruit, if they had not, as yet, made an attempt to furtively gain it.

The people from the country who came to make a visit to the sea-board and to catch a sea-breeze were his favorites. They came for a frolic and enjoyed it. They knew his weak side, and flattered him to his heart's content, and for their pains saw all his curiosities, had free access to his garden, and fed deliciously upon ripe currants, gooseberries, pears and plums, as happened to be ripe, and not unfrequently drank his brandy and water, or partook of his good wines. If he was at times a little free in his remarks, they took no notice of it, as they visited him in such large bodies that no one felt particularly aggrieved, and all departed in good glee. On one of these visits, which fell under the writer's observation, the country damsels carried on the fun so far as to beg a lock of his hair, now growing gray, for a locket. One wished for a lock that had become entirely gray, another beginning to turn so; and, believing them all, the locks of the Adonis were pretty well shorn; but it is more than probable they were all shorn from a wig. If this were the case, he must have been delighted at the joke; for he loved

to deceive as well as to be deceived. He was never satisfied with any thing natural; tricks without malice made up the great amusement of his latter days. He devised it in the morning and cherished it at night, and no doubt but that it filled his dreams.

There were times in which he quite astounded his acquaintances by his remarks, half wisely and half foolishly said. When every paper was teeming with lord Thurlow's famous speech in the house of lords, "When I forget my king may God forget me," he travestied it to "When I forget myself may God forget me," and many thought his more sincere than the chancellor's, which seemed to smack of political ambition.

One of Dexter's amusements was to examine many times a day his clocks and watches, in which his house abounded. In general, he had selected those of curious workmanship and of great value. Once a week he had them regulated and set a running. And to those that *behaved best*, to use his own phrase, he gave great names, sometimes most ridiculously inappropriate. He daily talked to his chronometers as things of life, and threatened to sell them if they did not go well. If they got out of order he sent for his friend T. B., a very ingenious watchmaker; a man of singularities, but of no moral aberrations. He indulged in harm-

less, but sometimes strange views of mental philosophy ; and Dexter's mind was to him a subject of much thought and analysis. He had the entire confidence of the great man of the East, and could draw from him all his honest opinions, whenever he had any that existed for a minute at a time. One day when the artist was regulating clocks and watches, which was no easy task, as many of them were of complicated workmanship, a conversation arose upon the nature of time. Dexter gave it as his opinion that time was part of the atmosphere, for some of his clocks, he said, showed when it was going to rain ; it was also a part of the heaven, for his clocks showed the growth and decrease of the moon. Then it was a part of the mind of man, for he could set one of the clocks so that it would ring a bell and wake him up at any hour of the night.

At last, like Simonides, when questioned upon the nature of God, who asked but a few hours at first to answer the question, and at the end of the time required a longer period, and so on until he refused to answer at all, Dexter gave it as his opinion that time was a shadow you could not catch with a hat like a butterfly, or shoot with a gun like a pigeon.

Time is a subject that every one, whatever calibre of mind he may possess, from

the philosophical and poetical Young, to Shakspeare's Fool, attempts to discuss.

"Good morrow, Fool," Quoth I. "No, sir," Quoth he,
"Call me not, Fool, till heaven hath sent me fortune."
And then he drew a dial from his poke,
And looking at it with lack-lustre eye,
Says very wisely, "It is ten o'clock ;
Thus may we see," quoth he, "how the world wags ;
'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,
And after an hour more it will be eleven ;
And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,
And then from hour to hour we rot and rot,
And thereby hangs a tale." When I did hear
The motley fool thus moral on the time,
My lungs began to crow like chanticleer,
That fools should be so deep contemplative,
And I did laugh, sans intermission,
An hour by his dial. O noble fool !
A worthy fool ! Motley's the only wear.

The fit of talking upon philosophy was still upon him, and he said that it was a great puzzle to him that God suffered man to do what he had not done himself. "Look at all these trees," said he, "there are no two of them alike ; no two men now going along in the street are alike ; there are two of nothing alike, yet you can make my clocks and watches so much alike that they do not vary a minute in a month. This is strange to me, and I have come to the conclusion, Mr. T. B., that man is a wonderful toad ! Sometimes I think he is a woodchuck, and digs a hole to keep out of sight, until he gets a fair chance for the clover ; now he looks to me like a weasel that can creep into a small place to catch a rat ; sometimes

he is as cunning as a fox, then as stupid as a jackass, and pretty generally, I do not know what the d—l to make of him." There was a pause, but the philosophizing spirit had not departed.

At length he resumed, "Mr. B., what do you think of our ministers in this town? are they, in your opinion, honest men?" "O! certainly," replied the philosopher, who was the best natured man in the world, "excellent men," enumerating them, and giving each his peculiar characteristics, to the extent of a longer eulogy than was his custom to give, for he wished to impress on Dexter's mind a respect for the holy men. "Well, well," said Dexter, "I suppose they are good men; but I want to know why they do not agree any better? they are always at sword's points, and will not enter each other's pulpits, or hardly nod at each other in the streets. M—— says, that Dr. S——'s god is his devil; and M—— again says that an Antinomian cannot go to heaven. I once asked lawyer P., who knows every thing, and as much again, what an Antinomian was; he told me in a minute that it was 'an old stingy fellow who would not go to law, and cheated the lawyer of his fees.'" "So you see he had got one member on his side, and that is pretty well for the lawyers." "Mr. B.," said Dexter, "I should like this

parson M——; he has a good voice, which makes the house ring again, and he is not afraid to roast sinners to a crisp; but then he has too much of the *Alphin* and the *Omegin* for me," meaning that he dealt too much in declamatory sentences, such as, "I am *Alpha* and *Omega*—the beginning and the end, the *first* and the *last*." The thunders of the gospel were more familiar to his tongue than the cooings of the dove, or the whispers of love, and the musical organs of Dexter were nicely attuned. One fact, in proof that if

"The man that has no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils,"

that he who has, is not necessarily great. The artist now wished, at this stage of the conversation, to avoid it altogether. But not so with Dexter; he continued, "I dare say that all our ministers are clever fellows, Mr. B., but I wish you and I had the winding of them up; if we had, they would not tick so loud, and would go better than they now do." So it falls out that one class of men are critics upon others, and even Pope acknowledged that Dennis had some truth in his satire.

In one of his paroxysms, Dexter ordered his son to take the gun and fire at a person in the street, who was, as he thought, too

impudently or sneakingly viewing the premises. The young man had principle and feeling enough to decline; but the father, drawing a pistol, swore he would shoot him, if he did not obey at once. The son fired, and either by intention or good fortune, struck the fence, near the traveller. A complaint was made to the magistrates, who adjudged Dexter to the county house of correction, for several months. He then made a bargain with the officer who was ordered to attend him to his place of confinement to suffer him to ride in his own coach to the county-house, in the town of Ipswich. The officer attended on horseback, and Dexter amused himself by jollification and ribaldry all the way, to the astonishment of the good people they passed. The disgrace at first was nothing to the pleasure he felt, from thinking that he was the first man sent to the house of correction who went in his own carriage, drawn by two splendid horses. In this state of confinement he grew sober, and began to feel the degradation of his situation, and to be solicitous of being relieved. This was effected, but not without considerable expense. It was said, at the time, to have cost him over a thousand dollars to get out of the scrape.

There are many of more intellect than Dexter possessed, who have stolen through

life without censure or notice, and passed as clever sort of men, in their way. It was Dexter's misfortune to have made himself an object of notoriety. He was mentally feeble, but his wealth gave him opportunities for display. Strong minds, under the influence of whim and caprice, often provoke a sneer from those of more moderate capacity. Many who attempted to take advantage of him got sadly deceived. He had no small share of cunning, when all seemed to have departed from him. He by direct or indirect means attained correct opinions upon the value of goods and lands, and seldom made an injudicious speculation. He dipped into the Ohio lands to great advantage, if the first executor on his estate had been sagacious and sold it at the right time. Although Dexter affected to dash onward as a leader, yet he drew all opinions from the public voice, constantly placing his ear wherever public opinion was to be caught. If he was not a profound calculator, he was a ready reckoner and came to results rapidly. There was no dulness about him. His elements, however shallow, were in constant motion. Sometimes it was thought that he seriously questioned his own greatness: but such rational moments did not frequently occur, and visions of distinction flitted before him oftener than any other. Now and

then a pious fit came over his mind, and he was determined to seek fame and heaven together, by becoming a patron to the church. He did not regard the satirical remark of the bard,

“Who builds a house to God and not to Fame,
Will scarcely mark the marble with his name;”

but connected the idea of the constant sounds of a church-going bell with “the whistling of a name.” Dexter’s gifts were always marked with the name of the donor. The face of his presented clocks and bells contained his name; but gratitude has not retained them all. The brush has passed over the former, and the latter have been exchanged at the foundery, for others of a larger size, or different tone; and the newly cast ones contain nothing of the former inscriptions. Was he much to blame? If every particle of vanity was extracted from every charity of life, how little would be the residuum! Vanity is a natural, if not a necessary ingredient, in all the eleemosynary acts. This vanity is often easily disguised, but, nevertheless, it exists. Dexter, like many others, had no balance-wheel to his mind, or regulator to his tongue, particularly when there were no dollars and cents in the business. With all his follies, he could not be called a hard master; for he paid all his workmen fairly, according to his agreement,

but was sharp in making his bargains. He insisted that every laborer was worthy of his hire. A laughable instance of this has often been related of him. One of his family being sick, he sent for a clergyman to comfort and pray with her. As he was about to depart, Dexter offered the holy man his fee. This was declined by the clergyman and insisted on by Dexter, who unquestionably had the best of the argument. Finding all entreaty vain, the master of the house ended the debate at the muzzle of a pistol. How few rewards were ever so enforced! From the lily hand of him who baptizes, and him who offers the firmer grasp of the physician, up to the iron clench of the lawyer, was it ever before recorded, that a paralytic stroke reached the hand extended to grasp a fee proffered by generosity?

There was a giant of a fellow, born somewhere near the head waters of the Merrimack, by the name of William Burley. He stood six feet seven inches high without his shoes. His frame was compact and strong. His hands were large and his feet monstrous. He was the champion of every wrestling ring within fifty miles of the place of his birth. He had heard of Dexter and went to see him. They were mutually pleased with each other, and a bargain was soon made for Burley's services. The laborer was to

do double work, eat a double portion of food, and do all Dexter's fighting; on condition that he was saved harmless from the effects of the law. Burley told his employer, that he was generally called *Dwarf Billy*, by way of distinction, and had no objection to the name. For some time the dwarf was seen industriously at work in the garden and field, much to the satisfaction of Dexter, who would go down to his field, sit upon a large basket of corn or pumpkins, and make the dwarf take the whole load on his back to the barn. He was so fond of the dwarf that he would spend no small part of the day with him to witness his feats of strength, which he would take great pains to make known to his neighbors.

While Burley was in the service of Dexter, a bold and boisterous sea captain made the Eccentric a visit and examined his house and grounds; but having "*pulled at the halyards*" too freely, was quite uncivil and found fault with every thing he saw. Dexter became so vexed that he threatened to call his men and drive him off. This was amusing to the captain, who dared Dexter to send any three of his men to him, and he would give them fair play. Dexter now thought of Burley, who had been so good natured about the house that Dexter had forgotten all about his fighting powers. Be-

fore the *dwarf* was sent for, the captain took from his pocket a guinea and offered to wager it that no two men that Dexter had, could get him fairly from the premises by corporeal strength. The bet was accepted. Billy came, and stood before the captain with his arms bare, his shirt collar open, and throwing on his antagonist a fierce look, turned to his employer and said, "Lord Dexter, do you wish me to skin him before I eat him, or not stop for that?" "Do as you please," said Dexter, highly amused to see how the captain looked. The captain eyed the man-monster for some time, put his guinea in his lordship's hands, saying, "By Jupiter? if this is your dwarf, how big are your giants?" Dexter handed the guinea over to Bill, who quite composedly put it into his pocket, and taking up a handful of apples, presented them to the departing guest, with a speech. "Captain, it is a good deal better to eat a few good apples than to fight even a dwarf! You may say that apples are big as an eighteen pound cannon-ball, at Halifax, but don't say that they are quite as large as my head, where I am." The dwarf soon got tired of his employer's caprices, and left him.

Dexter was not only amusing in himself, but not unfrequently the cause of wit and merriment in others. Towards the close of

his career a stranger came to Newburyport, and wishing to see lord Dexter, sent him a note, requesting the honor of an interview, understanding that his lordship, at times, was quite accessible. At this moment, "the great eccentric" was quite indisposed having the night before

"Like great Cæsar reeled sublime to bed,"

and of course his attendant did not give him the note; but the colored woman who was then reigning empress of the domains took the letter to one of her distinguished patrons and wished him to send an answer. The gentleman was at dinner with a young friend, and they thinking the writer of the note was a foreigner who had been finding fault with every thing in the country, and boasting most egregiously of his own, thought they would have some amusement with him. An answer was returned stating that, owing to the severe indisposition of some part of his family, lord Dexter would not receive the gentleman at his chateau, but would be happy to meet him at eight o'clock that evening at the Bridge inn, to share in a little supper of birds. The note was written on rose paper and sealed with a lordly impression. The friends prepared themselves for the interview. The oldest, who was to represent lord Dexter, wore a salmon-colored coat that had formerly

belonged to a French marquis who had fled from St. Domingo, at the time of the revolution, and had died at Newburyport; the disguise was still further made out by a full-dressed wig of a fashion more than half a century gone by. The younger, who was to personate the son, had borrowed a drummer's or fifer's red, shortcoat, rather too small for him, but which gave the air of higher gentility. It had been suggested in the answer to the stranger's note, that as they seldom were at public places, he must not inquire for Dexter directly, but for the gentleman in the west room. The stranger was punctual; but lord Dexter and his son had preceded him. As the stranger entered they saw they were out in their calculations, for instead of seeing the coarse, big, and burly foreigner, who had been talking of plums in his country as long as goose-eggs, and cantelopes as large as a peck basket, they met a gentleman of highly polished manners; and they soon found him as intelligent as polished. As he entered, lord Dexter arose to receive him, with the grace and dignity of a prince. He extended to the stranger one of the most delicate hands that was ever presented in friendship or ceremony, adorned with rings of great brilliancy and value. The stranger, although acquainted with the world, acknowledged afterwards, that he had never

witnessed such high-bred manners. The supper soon came in. His lordship asked the stranger if the bird should be carved after the style of the Roman Lucullus or after the manner of the modern epicure, Quin. A smile played upon the face of the stranger, and he, bowing, preferred the Roman method, for he was not very distinctly apprized of what that might be. The knife was drawn across the breast, and the division made transversely instead of laterally, separating, in a good measure, the white meat from the dark. "The Roman," said his lordship, "wished to have a good bite of the wing and breast to satiate his appetite, at first, and then pick upon the scanty dark meat to provoke a fresh appetite. Quin cut otherwise, because he wished to provoke an appetite first, and then indulge it afterwards." "Quite philosophical," thought the stranger, "for one of lord Dexter's reputation, but probably he has been misrepresented." After quite a discussion upon gastronomy, the politics of the day were introduced. The character of William Pitt, the great premier of England, came on the tapis. The son now broke forth in historical eulogy of that great man. The political state of the world made the background of the picture. His father's virtues were seen shadowed at a distance, and the

former age of lord Holland, general Wolfe, with the embalmed malice of Junius, were forcibly depicted. Buonaparte was placed alongside of Pitt the younger, and their characteristics dwelt upon, until they were seen blazing abroad, and overshadowing the whole world. From politics they passed to literature and science, and in all, the stranger bore his part most admirably, now and then gazing with wonder upon his entertainers. A new race of poets were then just twinkling on the literary horizon. Southey was then struggling through those Jacobin mists, which so long obscured his noble genius. Campbell had breathed his strain of hope, and Coleridge had begun his song. Sir Walter Scott was then a clerk, who had now ventured a few stanzas only, and was still recording on the docket. "*The Pursuits of Literature*" had just reached us, but the author was then not known. His taste, his vanity, his learning, his honest but oft-misguided satire, were subjects of passing remark. The stranger inquired for the American poets. They were presented to him in regular order, from the earliest history of our country to the time of the conversation, and fair analysis of them given. Lord Dexter now and then interspersed a shrewd and pointed remark, but yielded to his son, as being more conversant with modern subjects. 6*

The wine was excellent, and circulated freely. His lordship was at home in the science of the wine cup. He knew every vintage, on every soil, and now more than ever astonished the stranger. His lordship talked of every choice bottle from the Godolphin down to old Row's sales.

The subject of horses was alluded to; the *Sporting Magazine* was a text book to his lordship. The history of the horse was familiar to him, from the day he was first subjugated to man, to the barb and *grey hound of the desert* of the present hour. The conversation was continued until late in the night, when the father and son took their carriage to go home. The stranger suggested that he would follow, as he was not acquainted with the road. There was still a lurking suspicion in the stranger's mind that he was hoaxed. When Dexter and his son arrived at their chateau, the colored woman opened the gate, and they, wishing the stranger good night, rode in. His suspicions could exist no longer. He drove on, and they, waiting until he was out of sight, followed him. On viewing the subject the next day, they come to the conclusion that it was the proper course to make an explanation at once. The next morning they took a few friends with them and made the "amende honorable" to the stranger; by

this time he had become acquainted with the braggadocio they intended to gull, and was as much disgusted with him as they were. All, therefore, was readily forgiven, and the stranger was treated in the most courteous manner. He was introduced to lord Dexter and his driveling son, and often amused his friends by the feelings and reasonings which passed his mind in his evening's entertainment. He used to say that he did not think that there were as many diamond rings in the whole city, as Dexter exhibited that night. Late as it was when he returned, he took down the evening's conversation, and read it at several dinners, to the no small amusement of his listeners.

In some way or other Dexter and his family were constantly, for several years, before the public; for every thing they did was noticed. The common currents of life make a smooth surface, and attract but little attention; but on those waters where are seen a few ripples and whirlpools the eye is constantly directed; and it is no great matter to the observer whether their agitations are made by a sea-serpent or a horned pout, or any other small fry. Diogenes, in his course of life, did not half as much good as lord Dexter, for Dexter employed and fed many men, while the Greek philosopher hardly fed himself. The difference between

these great eccentrics was this, Diogenes wished even kings to get out of his sunshine, and Dexter wished his glory to shine on every fool who would worship him.

Dexter, although he did not do much good, did not live in vain. The follies he was guilty of fell on himself and his family, but the public did not suffer much. He was guiltless of shedding his country's blood; his ambition did not that way tend. He never aspired to the dreams of Condorcet, nor terrified the world with the dagger of Catiline. He sometimes affrighted his household with the discharge of a musket, but never aimed with sufficient precision to hit his object. He never led mankind astray by false reasoning, for he never reasoned. He had no influence in the social or political relations in life, for he was hardly within the pale of either circle. He never excited envy in the breast of any one. The beggar that received his alms pitied the opulent giver. If there were those who repined at their want of fortune, they thought of Dexter and ceased to grieve. The tyro at school used his name in his themes upon the vanity of riches, and ran parallels between the poor with wisdom and the rich with folly. It was a good subject and often discussed. Not unfrequently the youthful poet would launch a satirical rhyme at him, and even his dog did not es-

cape abuse for not having sagacity enough to read his master's character. He never rose to the altitude of hatred, nor to the dignity of scorn, but was named for the laughter of the mirthful and used by the grave "to point a moral or adorn a tale." *There were none so poor as to do him reverence.*

One autumnal morning the writer was passing Dexter's mansion quite early, and saw him talking with a group of women on horseback. Their appearance was more frightful than the weird sisters on the heath; their attire was entirely tatterdemalion; their faces begrimed with dirt and smoke; their eyes haggard and sunken, and their bonnets of every hue, and dingy in all. The horses on which they were mounted were nearly skeletons, and out-rosinanted Rosinante himself. The horse of Don Quixote, from the military panoply of his master, armed with a spur, had a touch of chivalry in him; but all fire had departed from the vision of their shadows of horses. The dialogue between the "*wise man of the East*" and those skinny, choppy-fingered witches could not be distinctly heard, but the laugh was screamy and obstreperous. The conversation lasted some time before they took up their line of march on their skeletons. From what was caught by the ear at their parting, the belief then was, that there had been a

trial of wit and sharp sayings between the women and lord Dexter, for they rode off with faces full of broad humor, while his bore marks of defeat. From whence came these imps the witness could not at that time conjecture, but on inquiry found they were "Dog-Towners," people who inhabited a heath about five or six miles distant from the Merrimack. The next day the writer with a friend made them a visit. The travellers entered a dreary looking tract of neglected land, evidently thought by the owners too poor for cultivation. A few wretched huts were scattered over the barren spot, among brush and weeds, with smoke issuing from every part of the roofs of the cabins. The horses seen the day before near the palace, were here and there browsing upon thistles, wire grass and blackberry vines, looking full of misery. The crows were cawing over their heads, with whetted beaks, impatient for their natural rights, the possession of their carcasses, when the few sands of the wretched jades had run through the hour-glass of their existence. The ominous croakings seemed evidently to occupy the minds of the wobegone steeds. Among the bushes were seen the women gathering whortleberries, blackberries and various wild herbs, such as thorough-wax, pennyroyal, white weed, mullein, five-fingers, yellow dock, scullcap, with

other herbs half domesticated, as saffron, hyssop, and balm. The herbs and berries were for the next day's market. On looking into the cabins we found an abundance of children, but not any men excepting one or two decrepit old fellows, past service; the others, we understood, had gone a mackerelling. The children of both sexes were without hats, bonnets or shoes, and had but a scanty rag to cover them. The outer layer of their hair was bleached to a brown flax color, of whatever natural hue it might have been originally. Their feet felt nothing but the sharpest thorns; they scoffed at the brier and complained not of stone-crushes. These children were as agile as young goats of the mountains, and but a little more intelligent. They were unacquainted with misery, for they were above the ills of life. Among the children were seen a few stunted swine, squealing around the hovels. They were the most sensitive of all the crew. There were also a few barn-fowl, the only well fed creatures we saw, for they were revelling on clouds of grasshoppers. To make up the group there were several cows of Pharaoh's lean kine, with a bell hanging between their horns to direct the ear of the heath-born urchins who looked after the cows straying from the neighboring cabins; we did not see any spinning-wheel, loom or instrument of

husbandry. There was, however, one branch of manufacture carried on even here; it was that of distillation. A few small stills were then in operation, for making tansy water, mint drops and similar essences. We bought there several bottles of rosewater of a most exquisite flavor. It was distilled from the leaves of the Eglantine. This species of the wild rose abounds in that region, and by long usage is the property of the herb-women, and never gathered by the owners of the pastures in which it grows. The friend of the writer, more fond of drawing landscapes than of shooting the wild pigeons, then plentiful there and all around, sketched a view of Dog-Town and adorned it with some figures of these weird sisters, over a still, drawing the alcohol from herbs, as was practised at Bagdad some nine hundred years before it was known on the Newbury borders. The sketch was graphic; the smoke of the alembic arose curling around the heads of the females watching the process; an old tattered remnant of a petticoat was thrown over their heads to keep off a scorching sun of the last of August. The figures were all to the life. The writer remarked that in some distant day, the picture might be read in the heraldry of some family, as the priestess of Nature, interrogating her mother to disclose her secrets. All that was to be

done to effect the change was only to soften the hard features of the females, give a fashionable air to the ragged garments, call the old black petticoat the veil of Isis, and inscribe this motto to the picture, "Hygeia in herbas," and the metamorphosis would be effected. By elevating the imagination and producing new creations from old ones, and from trivial incidents, a thousand greater changes were made in former days. The laureate of some future Dexter may seize the images and prove his patron to have descended from the great and early benefactors of mankind, who taught the virtues of vegetable medicines.

The next morning the cavalcade made their appearance in the city, and as they reached the borders of it filed off in separate directions to supply their particular customers, for all who traffic have a system of their own of doing business.

It would strike one as almost impossible that such a colony should exist within six miles of a beautiful and enlightened town. But few seemed to know any more about them than that they were Dog-Towners and supplied the town with herbs and berries. Ten thousand prayers have arisen from the holy altars of that pious town for the heathen who walk in darkness, and are perishing for lack of vision; but who ever heard a

single aspiration to heaven for a blessing on the colony of Dog-Town? Once, and again, have the generous hearts of the inhabitants of that good place, Newburyport, beat high at the departure of holy men, missionaries to the heathen, who went forth loaded with presents and wafted onward by blessings, to bring the Hindoos within the pale of Christianity, to break every spoke in the accursed wheels of the car of Juggernaut, and to oppose by holy violence the tenth incarnation of Brahma, and who were there that did not feel a portion of the enthusiasm generally exhibited at such times. But would it not be wiser to think of those who perish for lack of vision near us? I speak of times gone by, before home missionaries were thought of. All may now be changed, for aught I know.

But to my point; miserable as these beings of Dog-Town were, they still were possessed of some character, for they did all they could in their sphere, and they despised him who fell short of his duty. They laughed at the folly of Dexter as well as their betters, and felt that they were every way above him. They were bound to a hard-hearted soil that refused to pay the laborer, but they picked up a few of the foundling germs of nature, and by industry and perseverance made a new class of statistics in national traffic;

while the possessor of great wealth was then frittering away the stores a blind fortune had showered upon his head, casting them away without feeling or without principle.

Man, a little beside himself, is the most unreasonable of all animals. Dogs and horses belonging to those accustomed to being inebriated will come to the succor of their masters. The writer remembers a spirited horse that no blows would drive to a quick pace when he felt his master reeling on his back. It was said that Dexter's dog would never leave his master's feet when he was at all intoxicated. What a satire on the presumption of man, who arrogates to himself to be lord of creation !

A rich man of eccentricities will always gather around him strange associates, and Dexter could boast of many such. Among those who early had an influence over him John P—— may be named. He was of a respectable family, from which at a tender age he became an outcast. He was a being possessed of high powers of taste, imagination and invention. He had in the common paths of life gleaned something in the form of knowledge, and could make most dexterous use of it among the mass of mankind. He was a splendid chirographist, and this was then the great desideratum for a school-master, to which honor he aspired ;

but with a discreet school committee his morals would not answer, notwithstanding their impressions of his genius and learning. Having been rejected as a candidate for one of the town schools, he opened a private one, and for a while attracted attention and had a respectable number of pupils. The writer of this memoir, then only nine years of age, was among them. John P—— was a daredevil in some things and a coward in others, a man of perpetual contradictions in his characteristics. He gulled the world with pretensions to occult sciences, while he knew but little of any practical branch of knowledge. He set up claims to judicial astrology and cast nativities for those who were credulous enough to believe in the science, and sometimes appeared a sincere believer in his own calculations. He said of himself that he should never die until the sun was blotted out of the heavens, and, to fix the credulity of thousands, expired in a miserable mansion on the 16th of June, 1806, during the great and total eclipse of the sun on that day. He was stretched on his death-bed, so exhausted that he could not raise himself without assistance to gaze on the phenomenon. Being supported by some one, and handed a piece of smoked glass to look at the sun, he reverted to his former prophecy, and at the moment of total darkness,

when all nature around him seemed distressed, the chill of death came over him and he expired without a sigh. However natural may be such death, superstition never forgets such an instance, but treasures it up in the memory, and it has its influence for years to come, if not on the conduct, certainly on the feelings of many. One of the freaks of this eccentric man was, as he called it, to test his pupils' pluck. One instance the writer can never forget. A blind preacher, by the name of Prince, died, and during his last moments requested to be buried in the tomb with the celebrated George Whitefield and the reverend Jonathan Parsons. Whitefield had died in Newburyport, in 1770, and a vault was made for him under the first Presbyterian church in the town, and Parsons was laid by his side a few years afterwards. This was the only tomb under or near the building. It was opened a day or two before the funeral of blind Prince, and hundreds visited it. Whitefield and Parsons had been buried in their surplices and wigs, which remained, after so many years, tender, or nearly rotten, but entire. Every visiter stole a piece of the holy relics to carry away and preserve. At the close of the afternoon lessons the school-master and astrologer took a pupil to the vault and showed him the remains. The entrance was by a trap door in the broad-

aisle of the meeting-house. A small lamp was glimmering over the sacred ashes of the two pious divines. The wicked teacher saw that the boy was in a profound reverie, and silently stole out of the tomb, and shutting the trap door, departed. The child heard the trap door close, and for an instant trembled at the thought of being alone in the charnel-house; but he instantly recovered himself, and stood composedly gazing on those who slept beneath. Can the departed spirits of good men injure children? was the question put to himself. This was soon settled in his mind, and he taxed his memory for all the anecdotes of them which he had heard from his pious mother, who had often listened to the orator Whitefield, during his arousing appeals to those who went on in life "*sleeping on the confines of eternity and walking unconcerned over the bottomless pit.*" The child of the tomb at that hour is still living, and has been frequently heard to say that he dates back to that period the reverence in which he ever holds the dead. How long he was there he could not say precisely, but it was the time the school-master took to go some distance, and drink tea with the boy's mother. As the astrologer finished his last cup, he told the mother the position in which he had left her son to test his courage. The indignant woman

sent him immediately to the release of her child, desiring an elder boy to go with the monster, as she called him, to see that he went directly to the church. She was disturbed, but at once observed "the boy will sustain himself, I know his character:" still the fondness and fearfulness of the mother lingered beneath the guise of the pious heroine. When the prisoner returned not a word passed between him and his mother on the subject, and months elapsed before either alluded to the circumstance.

Such was the man who for several years was the director of the mind of Dexter. He at once understood the calibre of the successful fool, and took the proper course to manage him. The astrologer pretended to initiate his patron into the occult arts and sciences, and exhibited his books of necromancy treating of Druidical rites and abounding in Runic characters. There can be no doubt that at the conclusion of the lessons both the master and pupil's information was nearly the same. The writer has the most vivid recollection of the astrologer and his school-house. Under a widely spreading elm of the first class, which probably had been spared by the early settler, on the south side of High street, between what are now State and South streets, in Newburyport, there was a small cottage containing one room;

this was the school-room of master P——. His manners were familiar, his discipline lax, and his punishments few and not severe. He taught by conversation and lectures; and so happy were his illustrations that his boys of ten years old were superior to those of other schools at fifteen. He had several maps and charts, and spent hours each day in showing his pupils the different parts of the globe. When geography was not a study in the common schools, his boys could chalk out a tolerable map on the floor and name the large cities and great rivers of different countries. He knew a smattering of chemistry, and performed many experiments in natural philosophy; but, so little understood was the science of chemistry at that time, these experiments were called tricks. He had been taught some optical illusions, which excited wonder among his pupils. He would take them into the woods and fields and teach them the names of trees and plants, and of the birds as they flew by. It was so much more delightful to go to master P—— than to other schools, that no scholar that had been with him ever returned cheerfully to the other instructors. The rare books he possessed were sometimes shown to his favorite pupils, and he explained their uses to them, laughing at the credulity of the world. He introduced athletic

sports and superintended them himself, which was a most scandalous affair to the other grave teachers. One of them went so far as to say that he had gone in a swimming with his boys and showed them how to acquire the art! what gross impropriety, thought the dull teachers. The writer's memory has hardly lost a single occurrence of that memorable epoch; and on reviewing the man and his course, although he must confess that the extent of his knowledge of science was small, and there was a great deal of charlatantry about him as a teacher, yet he pronounces him a man of extraordinary powers of mind, and one who more than any other had a forecast of what instruction should be. It is indeed a misfortune for a man to live before his age, or rather in advance of it. After all, he lived with a good-sense people, and might have been respectable had he been less profligate in his habits, or more guarded in his conduct. He foolishly ridiculed what he called superstition, and satirized stupidity wherever he found it. He made himself hated by coining *soubriquets* for his neighbors that often had point and sarcasm in them; and too much truth to make a palatable joke of. He took more pleasure in annoying dulness than in enlightening ignorance, and was never happier than when he could raise a laugh at any blockhead's expense. There

was no medium in any thing he did ; his generosity was prodigality, and his friendship enthusiasm, but his enmities died away as soon as he had succeeded in making his foe ridiculous. He was a kind and skilful watcher over a sick bed, and never appeared weary in administering to the comfort of the afflicted. He had a passion for being with the dying and the dead ; and he adjusted the folds of the winding sheet with exquisite taste, and the grave digger's mattock and spade were lovely instruments in his eyes. He evinced a hatred to all lies on tomb-stones, and often made parodies on flattering epitaphs. One which ended in an old fashioned couplet, "*Death*, by thy fiery darts thou hast me slain," he changed to "*Rum*, by thy," &c. which alteration made a great noise at the time.

Many stronger minds than that of Dexter have been at times under the influence of superstition. His was in constant thralldom by its influence. Brutus saw Cæsar's ghost, who promised to meet him at Philippia, and Buonaparte believed in presentiments, Fates and Fortunes. My lord Dexter had a great variety of fortune-telling works, dream books, and such valuable trash. Often, not trusting entirely to one juggler, he would consult another, and sometimes they played into each other's hands. On the pur-

lieus of the town there lived a singularly bold, intelligent woman, who went by the name of MADAM HOOPER: the name she probably assumed; as it was a highly respectable one in the town in which she lived. She had made her appearance after the peace of 1763, and unquestionably had been an appendage to the English army in Canada. She gave out that she was the widow of a British officer, who fell with Wolfe. She had received a good education, particularly for that day. This woman obtained a school in the town, and taught females with success; but, at length, becoming tired of the labor, she gave it up and lived on fortune-telling. She was wondrously shrewd, and made many admirable conjectures upon forth-coming time, by knowing the past events of the individual's life. She sometimes pretended that her charms refused to work, and her applicants were sent away, to come again in a more propitious hour. This gave her an opportunity of hearing all the conjectures made upon the subject. Then her Mephistopheles would obey the league and bring information. She had a masculine voice, and powerful arm, by which she could wield a sword, particularly a broad sword, with the skill and force of a fencing master. She was also an excellent shot with gun or pistol, and frequently

amused herself by trials of skill, all alone, except she was watched by some wonder-struck boys who had taken pains to conceal themselves to witness her feats. Her conversations generally partook of aphoristic fragments, enigmatical sentences, with uplifted or downcast eyes, or attended with strange gestures; and she not unfrequently closed her incantations with indistinct mutterings, as if communing with invisible spirits. On a time Dexter had a bed of fine melons robbed, night after night, of the ripest and best of fruit. His astrologer could not give him any information on this subject, as it was nearly the full of the moon, the patroness of thieves, and the stars, by being further from the earth, refused to answer all inquiry at the time. The astrologer advised Dexter to apply to madam Hooper, as her conjuration was not affected by the moon or any other planet. Dexter, at length, applied to her. She called up the thief for her own satisfaction. She represented him as a grave looking man, in drab clothes, one that was never suspected by the owner of the melons, but she distinctly told him how to find the house, and that there he would find several melons that had been marked by him. Precisely as he was directed, he did, and there were his melons, concealed, to be sold next day. She had

now established her fame with Dexter. It was probably by a system of espionage that she was able to do all this; but it must be confessed, that many of her prophecies, inuendoes, and even positive declarations, have, as yet, found no Sphinx to unriddle them. She was one of the best physiognomists in the world. She frequently made his lordship a visit, and asked for nothing she did not receive. She did not live long enough to see Dexter in his wane, but at her death he took into favor the celebrated MOLL PITCHER, who lived at the very inconvenient distance of twenty-eight miles from his chateau; but she was several times consulted by Dexter. The first time he visited the dame he went in disguise; but she soon found him out, but, concealing the fact, told all that had happened to him for many years past, and this chained him at once to the full belief of the potency of her spells. Pitcher was a shrewd woman, without education, and Dexter sympathized with her more readily, and understood her better, than he did the learned dame Hooper. He was afraid of the latter, but he came within the magic circle of the other without any dread. The history of these women might be pursued until the wise would blush, and the judicious grieve, to find how many of good sense in most things have made fools of themselves, by

clandestinely consulting these fortune-tellers. The belief that the devil allows some of his imps to know something hid from the wise was an early impression, and one that will last as long as man exists, but such is the progress of common sense that the evils that once flowed from this error have ceased to be in any degree alarming. Dexter, in all probability, saved money by his acquaintance with these persons, reputed to know every one who trespassed upon his premises. But few men or boys dared under the cover of darkness to run the risk of encountering those who dealt in supernatural agency. Such is human nature, that many, who affect to despise all stories of hobgoblins and witches in the sunshine, are confoundedly afraid of them in the dark, particularly when doing what their consciences teach them to be wrong. To guard his fruit, a few sentinels, man-traps and spells of enchanters, united, gave his garden a security that the Hesperides never was sure of, under the potent spells of the dragon; and there is no more insidious and formidable foe than the boys of a city are to the orchards of the vicinity.

We have mentioned Dexter's literary taste as being greater than his acquirements. He, in emulation of the kings of England, selected a *poet laureate*; never was there a more

admirable selection. Their tastes, their genius, and, in some measure, their course of life, were suited to each other. The name of the bard was rather unpoetical, being JONATHAN PLUMMER; but at that time that wicked wag, lord Byron, had not said "Amos Cottle Phœbus! what a name." He was younger than his patron by more than twenty years; but was wonderfully grave for his age. He was born near Gravel hill, in the town of Newbury, a large ancient town, from which Newburyport had been taken, a few years before the revolution. Unlike most poets, he died near the very spot of his birth-place. He was a strange and wayward boy, had a great fondness for reading, and possessed a remarkable memory. At about sixteen or eighteen years of age, he attended a meeting of religious enthusiasts who worshipped God in the woods and fields. Here, while listening to the ranting of field preachers, his genius blazed forth, and he spoke like one of gifts and graces. His voice was deep toned and solemn, and of great compass, and his discourses were often graced with anecdotes from his miscellaneous reading. He soon announced to the world his intention of devoting his days to the holy calling of saving souls, and abandoned his former honest calling of selling halibut from a wheelbarrow,

at fair weight and low prices; a fat fin cut for two coppers a pound, the more solid parts for a copper; and when there was a more plentiful supply, even a "*Brumagem*" would buy enough to furnish a man a dinner. When the halibut were gone, he used his wheelbarrow as a vehicle from which he vended straw for under beds, and, for years, he managed this business. He, at times, under his mass of straw concealed certain publications, that were frowned at, if not prohibited, at common law. He sold HOYLE to young men, and a copy of Bonnel Thornton's poems might be had of him; but when he became a student in divinity all these sources of profit failed, for it was not decorous now to deal in these matters; but as genius is always full of resources, he soon appeared in another sphere of letters. He seized all the *terrible accidents, drownings, suicides, and hangings*, and ornamenting his sheet with coffins, and spreading it out with eulogies, elegies, and *warnings*, in prose and verse, he ushered them to the public from a *literary cabinet*, as he called the basket on his arm. This was a profitable trade, for he added to this *Pierian stock* a box of Hygeian pills, or a tincture in phials for certain cures and preventives, &c. At times, for a few cents, he would recite his own compositions, or those he had committed to

memory ; and, if in an affected manner, yet that manner was not without effect. During some months in the winter he retired to the country, and kept school, and was not unfrequently quite a popular master, for in his day there were districts in which the question among the school committee was, not " what does he know ?" but " how cheap can we get him ?"

His whole business now was with the Muses, in one or more of their capacities, as inspirers or teachers of mankind. In the bright and sweet risings of his fame, but while he yet wore the clerical habit, his productions caught the eye of the "*greatest man of the East* ;" an introduction was readily had, for wealth makes no ceremony of entering the temples of learning. The divine had never received a call, although his fame had been widely spread. How often do we see prosing dulness take the place, ay, the precedence of exalted talents. Perhaps thinking he should never rise to a *benefice*, he closed with a proposal to enter the service of Dexter as *poet laureate*. The stipend, for genius can never stoop to salaries, was small, but he was furnished with a singularly splendid livery. It consisted in a long, black, frock coat, with stars on the collar, and also at the front corners ; this livery also was fringed, where fringes could be put ; a black

under dress, shoes and large buckles, with a large cocked hat, and a gold-headed cane, made out the dress. The poet laureate began his reign by eulogies in prose and verse, and for some time the poet and patron were mutually happy; but after a while Jonathan found that his muse could not produce flattery half as fast as the cormorant appetite of his patron demanded, and when he did concoct an article of the kind it was not half as saleable as the wonderful matters which he gathered for his calender of strange events. A religious scruple came over his conscience; in a dream he had learned that it was sinful to wear fringes; this scruple he imparted to his patron, who ridiculed the impression as nonsensical. This was too much for the laureate; still, however, after mutual jealousies and scoldings on one side, and mutterings on the other, they patched up treaties of peace, which lasted until the death of the patron.

Jonathan expected to be remembered in the will of Timothy, but he was not, and his grief could not be assuaged, or the loss of his legacy could not be forgotten; but he was obliged to console himself with the honors he had already received.

The poet continued his labors in compositions and sales for nearly twenty years after the death of his patron, and by the most rigid economy accumulated a pretty little

property, as was found at his death. He had written, published, and sold several wills of his own, before his death, but he left one altogether different as his last testament. Some of the fair damsels mentioned in a will he published many years before, had grown old when he was about to give up the ghost, and their charms were no longer the keys of his coffers. During a great part of his life no man was more self-complacent than Jonathan Plummer; no poet ever more satisfied with his muse; but his distracted brain at length was seized with the disease of *self-aborrence*, and he acted on the maxim, "if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out," until it led to a mutilation of his person; but he recovered from this, and died of self-starvation. So departed this poet of *dreadful accidents*, of *groans*, and *tears*, and *warnings*, who had been city and country ballad-monger for more than forty years. If his fame shall not be as extensive as the laureates of other times, his life was more singular; no one of the whole list, from Dryden to Southey, was more industrious; and in this he differed from them, he was more successful in selling than in composing; and perhaps in one more he surpassed them, he was quite as grateful to his patron as they were to their kings. Dryden was removed from his office by a profligate

monarch, or his subservient ministers, to make room for such a poetaster as Shadwell. The supremacy of Plummer was never questioned, nor was he ever superseded; although at times it must be confessed that Dexter received praise from rival poets, and "rolled it as a sweet morsel under his tongue." Plummer was moral, didactic and pathetic, but indifferently descriptive. I do not remember that he ever attempted a full picture of the palace and its appendages, notwithstanding it afforded a more ample field for poetical description than *Windsor Forest*, or even *Wapping*, themes on which Pope dwelt with so much delight, and in which he succeeded so admirably well. Sternhold and Hopkins were the models on which our bard fashioned his productions, and if he deviated from them it was to follow the early New England psalmist, whose works, shame on the taste of the times! have gone down to oblivion. He satirized the follies and vices of men without being particular as to fools and culprits.

Plummer boasted that he had been crowned with the poet's wreaths of flowers, by the hand of his patron, in open day, but never seemed satisfied that all had been done which the august ceremony required. Some years after the laurel crown had been placed on Plummer's brow, some one read to him

the ceremony of crowning those poets who had won the prizes in Italy. The crowning of Petrarch and Corrina attracted his attention, and he sighed to think that he nor his patron was acquainted with these gorgeous ceremonies when he was honored with the laurel. Dexter had been told that the Druids crowned their bards with misletoe, and as this did not grow in his garden he was directed to use parsley in its stead. This herb, or rather weed, is frangible, and easily wilts; but in this case it did not perish by sun, wind or rain, for the mob of boys pressed on so furiously that the ceremony was interrupted, the laurel scattered, and the poet and his patron fled. Some laughing damsel, hearing of the issue of the ceremony, bound some artificial flowers on the cocked hat, which looked as well as the wreath of Parnassus, drenched in the richest dews of Castalia. This was the only time an attempt was ever made to crown an American poet, literally, as it was done in former times. Still there are men now walking our streets who wear the bays by dint of puffers, who never deserved a single leaf of laurel; who, for *wishy-washy, silky-milky* rhymes, printed in either hemisphere, and trumpeted by those who expect a similar favor, are astonished that the world let them pass without pæans from every quarter. They

may reign for a while, as Shadwell took the laureate's leaf from Dryden, but they will in a few years pass away as the whole bevy of the Della Cruscan school was swept into oblivion by the iron hand of Gifford. There was some hissing among the small snakes, and writhing and darting of stings of those who reared their heads as gorgons of a bigger size, but the very "*reluctantes dracones*" died within the grasp of the modern Juvenal. Oh! for some extermination of this noisome race, for whether they belong to the tribe of creeping reptiles, or may be classified with fawning puppies, they are equally offensive.

The poet was in the full sale of his works in 1808, after the death of his patron, when a young lawyer came to Newburyport to practise in his profession. The honest owner of the premises which he wished to hire told him candidly, that he would find one great nuisance about the premises, that no one but death could abate. He then stated that Plummer, the poet, was in the habit of sitting on the steps of the office several hours in the day, and that his temper was so vindictive that he, nor any other person, dared drive him away. "Never mind that," said the young man, "I will take that upon myself." On taking possession of the premises he said not a word to Plummer for some weeks,

and he came with his basket as usual. The occupant in the mean time bought of all the *Parnassian* assortment of the poet, and put his name as a subscriber for whatever might come from his pen; the poet's confidence was entirely won, and they interchanged as friends the words of salutation every day. At length, one day the lawyer took Mr. Plummer aside, and observed, "I know you are my friend, and you will hear me patiently. You are aware that people who visit lawyers' offices are of all classes,—sometimes the rich, who wish to oppress, sometimes the poor, who want protection, and not unfrequently the vicious: now none of these wish to be inspected by the pious clergyman who may point at them in his next discourse; this drives a great many from my door to others; you certainly do not want to injure me." The poet seemed to awake from a dream. "I see it, I see it all," was his first remark,—“you shall find me there no more,” and was as good as his word. The poet was now invited to come into the office, and examine the lawyer's library, which contained the English classics, and select those he wished for his reading. The poet sparingly availed himself of the offer, but took several volumes of poetry, which he read with avidity, and conversed upon the merits of the authors, as he returned the books, if with

some singularity, certainly with no small degree of acumen; but after a few months he ceased to come altogether; when the lawyer meeting him, said in a pleasant way, "I wish to know, friend Plummer, why you have discontinued reading my books; "I hope you are not offended with me." "I will tell you honestly," said Plummer, "I dare not read any more books of poetry, for the more I read the less satisfied I am with my own composition. Once I thought I stood number one as a poet, for God had inspired me, as he once did doctor Watts, but I can't make it go now, as I once did before I was seduced by the heathen gods and goddesses. I am punished for having gone astray after idols; but I can't help saying that they are sweet creatures; but I must forget them, or I shall certainly be lost." It was in vain for the young gentleman to assert that in his opinion, *Young*, *Milton*, *Cowper*, and others were equally inspired with the good doctor Watts; it would not do. On a close examination the inquirer found that "*Quarles' Emblems*" was this poet's most admired volume, and this was presented to him. The subsequent writings of Plummer bore evidence of his having thoroughly read the work; no wonder that such a wild, pious, half crazy production of genius as that of Quarles' should attract such a poet as Plum-

mer. Indeed, it is astonishing that the work is not held in higher estimation than it is, by those of purer taste, for some of his figures and illustrations border on the oriental beauties of the Apocalypse.

The person of Plummer was not of most etherial make. His feet were long and clumsy; his legs thick, his chest broad and strong; his face was long, with a prominent nose, wide mouth and thick lips. He was irascible and vindictive, and it fared sadly with the boy he caught, who, to use his own peculiar phrase, attempted to make *gamut* of him. He had the vanity—and is there a poet without it?—to think that he was a handsome man, and that half of the female world was enamored with him; but neither beauty, wealth or fame, kept the laureate from the destiny of falling by his own will.

“Poets, alas! must fall like those they sung,
Deaf the praised ear, and mute the tuneful tongue.”

A humble stone marks the spot where the ashes of the laureate repose, but few pilgrimages are made to it. Around him rest the early settlers who were men of renown. The Dummers, the Sewalls, &c., are there, in their narrow beds. The requiem that sung them to repose had ceased ages before the laureate came to join the congregation of the dead. In the same grave-yard are buried two poets of legitimate standing among

the sons of song. William Boyd, who was the author of a poem on WOMAN, and other pieces of exquisite poetry, found a grave in this yard, among his ancestors. His monument, unlike most poets', is conspicuous. His taste was refined, his muse as delicate as the Mimosa; no easterly blast could make the sensitive plant recede, fall and faint, sooner than a coarse, critical remark would the spirits of Boyd. His was no age for the refinements of the muse. Poetry, at the time he flourished, some forty years ago, was held in slight estimation, particularly if it was classical, as was every line from the pen of Boyd. Plummer and Boyd were contemporaries: the latter was bred in the groves of learning, and drank freely from the pure fountains of inspiration; the former grew up among fishermen, clam diggers, and lobster catchers, yet his works were read by thousands where Boyd's were by one. The ballad maker and death's head vender grew rich on the sale of his trash, when the sweet and delicate bard paid for the printing of his own poems, without thinking of sales or profits—so much depends on the spirit of the age in giving character to men.

Robert Coffin, well known as the "Boston bard," was buried in this place also. He wrote many things that bore the true stamp of genius, but his existence was short, fever-

ish, and but of little value to society. He had none of the delicacy of Boyd, or the perseverance of Plummer. As soon as he began to reason, and feel, he quarrelled with heaven, earth and himself, and continued the warfare until life was at an end. His works were collected and published by himself a few years before his death. The fame of a writer of fugitive pieces is generally lessened by a collection of them. Odes, hymns, &c. often receive a momentary brightness, and current reputation, from the occasion on which they were written, which is lost or greatly impaired when they are presented in a volume. Plummer was wise enough to give only that which the occasion called forth, and never stereotyped or seldom published a second edition. He knew the signs of the times, and the tastes and habits of the public. The poet laureate went to his grave thinking that "his eloquence was sweeter than his song." Villiers and Bernard, two excellent actors of the old Federal street theatre, were on a visit to Newburyport, giving readings and recitations which were very well attended. At that time there were a goodly number in the city who were fond of elocution. By some address on the part of several gentleman of the place, the actors had an interview with Plummer and prevailed on him to read, recite and de-

claim, some of his own compositions in prose and verse. After hearing him for a long time, they gave it as their opinion, that if he had received proper instruction he would have made one of the first pulpit orators of the age,—having a voice strong, flexible, and euphonious; but which was spoiled by the affectation of being wonderfully pathetic. Plummer is not the only one made ridiculous by such affectation. The evil is a common one in our pulpits to this day, although there have been great improvements in pulpit eloquence within a few years; there is more nature and less cant than formerly among ecclesiastic or other orators.

The person who had the most influence over Dexter of all who were near him was a female African, whose name was LUCY LANCASTER. She was the daughter of an old African brought to this country when young. He always stated that he was the son of a prince, and had been taken in his first battle. He was always believed by his master in his assertions, and these were strengthened by the attentions paid him by those who came with him, young and old. On the day of negro election, as it was at that time called, in Massachusetts—meaning nothing more than this, that by long usage, the slaves, who were always treated well in that state, were permitted to have a parade and

jollification on Boston common, on the day of the assembling of the general court; Cæsar, Lucy's father, was generalissimo, and had from his rank twelve footmen to run by his side while he paraded on horseback. His horse was always one of great speed and elegance; for he seemed to have a presumptive right to borrow the best horse in the town. The daughter of the prince Cæsar was Patagonian in size, and quite heroic in character. She was shrewd, well informed, and brave as ever man or woman could be. She allowed no negro to enter her dwelling. Her acquaintances were of the first gentry. If a person was named for the most unhesitating confidence it was lawyer Parson, as she was called by the boys—a name they courteously bestowed upon her, because they thought her mind was of a kindred order to that of the "giant of the law." She endeared herself to many for great services during an alarming period of sickness, in 1796, when the yellow fever raged in the town. Night and day she spared no pains, but fearlessly, resolutely and skilfully attended her sick friends. She had a constitution nothing, in that day, could break down, and her judgment was of a superior order; as far above other common minds as her strength was above that of ordinary females. Dexter, finding that she lived in the

upper classes of society, sent for her in some case of sickness, and, much to his credit, she ever afterwards kept the hold she had at that time gained as Dexter's nurse. She was the confidant and confessor of the whole family, and, by her prudent management, often settled quarrels or prevented them. It was in vain for any member of the family to oppose corporeal or mental power against her, and after a while they made no resistance to her mandates. If Dexter loaded a gun to shoot some one, Luce was sent for; if the son had a crazy fit, she must be there; if the daughter made an escape, as she sometimes would do, Luce hunted her up, and brought her back. She entered the house when she pleased, and staid as long as she pleased. The servants obeyed her as mistress of the whole household. This sagacious woman always gave Dexter more credit for mind than any one else ever did. She thought that he was a very honest man and would not take any advantage of his workmen, but would see them paid strictly according to contract. She thought that his eccentricities arose in a measure from the flow of his animal spirits. He could not be still, and having nothing of importance to occupy his mind, he fluttered from folly to folly without thinking of what he was about. She understood his charac-

ter perfectly, and when he was in one of these restless fits, she would, if possible, keep him from liquor, and advise him to make an alteration in the garden, out houses or fences; and as soon as his workmen were busy, he was happy until the matter was finished, and this cure often was effectual for some time. As Dexter became more weak and irascible, the more she was wanted, and the more good she did. There can be no doubt but that his freaks would have been oftener and more injurious if he had dispensed with her services. She often quenched the fire as it was kindling, and shot the folly ere it flew. Dexter never understood the sound maxim of prudence, "*When you don't know what to do, don't you do you don't know what.*" There is some excuse for the man; he had no taste for reading any thing, and probably did not pay much attention to any thing he might have attempted to read; he was excluded from all society; the common walks were not paths for him, and in the higher circles he could not travel. The pride of walking in his garden, watching his flowers and trees, was something, and the contemplation of his images still more. He said of himself that he could no more be still than a devil's-needle, and sometimes used to say if there was a transmigration of souls he should next

appear in one, and with this train of thought in his mind he would suffer no one to kill this insect. Thus his mind roved from whim to whim, which might have been kept steady, as it was in early life, if he had not been free from all anxiety for a support. This solicitude to obtain a subsistence is the balance-wheel in minds much stronger than that of our subject.

Dexter continued his course of life, without any essential change of habits, until October 26, 1806, when he quietly expired at his palace.

“In Monday place, Sir Richard Monday died.”

His life was a much longer one than could have been reasonably expected of a man given to such indulgences. One thing seemed to protract his days; he drank nothing but the purest and best of liquors. Most inebriates grow gross in their tastes, and at last prefer that liquor which comes the nearest to the highest proof alcohol to any other.

In his last days, he was sensible of the follies of his life, and was desirous of atoning for his errors as far as he could, by making a just disposition of the property he was about to leave. He took the best of advice and followed it. It is a singular fact, that while most wise men's wills are injudicious in some features, no one ever found fault with Dexter's. Not only his offspring, but

his collateral relations, were provided for in a proper distribution of his goods and estate.

His remains were not allowed to repose in the tomb he made for himself; the *Board of Health* would not permit his wishes to be carried into effect, and in this they were prudent. The grave of such a man, in such a public place, would have been a nuisance indeed. He sleeps quietly in the Hill cemetery, in Newburyport, the most numerous congregation of the dead within the precincts of the corporation. A simple stone marks the grave of the once ambitious *fortunate*, whose living dreams were full of posthumous glories. The Dexter house has lately been repaired, but the garden is not kept in such order as it was in the days of the second occupant after the decease of the owner. Mr. Caldwell had a taste for gardening, and did all he could to make the grounds look well. It will soon pass into hands desirous of restoring its former beauty and splendor, without a particle of the frippery which once was seen there, to the amusement of the traveller, and to the annoyance and grief of the neighborhood.

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